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Capturing the Personal and Pedagogical Experiences of Faculty During Emergency Response Teaching at a Research University in Abu Dhabi

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the teaching experiences and emotional well-being of faculty at a research university in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The study took place during Emergency Response Teaching due to the global pandemic and its implications on instruction and learning. A 60-question-line interview questionnaire was disseminated to 400 faculty members during the spring semester of 2020. 26 faculty members (6.5%) completed the interview questionnaire. Results showed evidence of a range of pandemic-related, negative impacts on the faculty's experiences and feelings. Many faculty respondents were challenged and frustrated in terms of being able to respond to a range of issues and themes identified in the study. The discussion focused on the development of preemptive approaches which might be developed for future use should a comparable situation arise.

Keywords: COVID-19, pedagogy, mental health, communication, Information Technology, student engagement.

Introduction

The two years of disruption by the global pandemic have seen sudden and unprecedented changes in how educational courses were delivered. Teachers and students across the world have had their academic world turned upside down by the COVID pandemic, which has been with us now since December 2019. The academic community has transitioned from a face-to-face classroom to a digital learning environment, which has brought about a myriad of challenges (Ndambakuwa & Brand, 2020). Those challenges have been many and varied, from meeting pragmatic needs

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to skill up on new technology and delivery platforms to navigate the vagaries of the internet, to addressing socio-psychological questions involving isolation, physiology, engagement, and motivation (Castelli & Sarvary, 2021; Schneider & Council, 2021; Schieman, Badaway, Milkie & Bierman, 2020). The whole concept of 'going to work'—and for our students, 'going to university'–involves changing one physical and spatial environment for another, each with its dynamics, expectations, culture, and parameters (Chaudhry, Paquibut, Islam & Chabchoub, 2021). The removal of this distinction creates obvious problems (Schieman et al., 2020). The entire process has been a baptism of fire for many of us teachers and the learners for whom we are responsible.

Communication is at the core of what we do and is based on a myriad of clues and signposts. Nonverbal communication, such as facial expressions and gestures, is a significant part of how we communicate as human beings; this form of communication has been radically affected by a switch to the digital environment. For example, the use of cameras in classes has raised issues of privacy and led to resistance from many students in different parts of the world (Chaudhry et al., 2021; Johnson, 2020). For teachers in our university, this issue of physical presence/visibility has been compounded by additional cultural, gender, and religious factors, which have resulted in most students not wishing to use their cameras at all (Hurley, 2020). The resulting need to rely on chat and voice has brought obvious limitations, added challenges and a new set of demands on the facilitation and interpersonal skills of instructors teaching in virtual class spaces. All of these factors have created a new academic environment that has been difficult for educators to adapt to and caused stress for many faculty members at our institution.

Web searches conducted within the Middle East region reveal that much of the research on emergency distance learning (EDL) focuses on pedagogy in the digital environment, best practices, techniques 'that work', software, apps, and foci of common interest. However, harder to find is a more phenomenological focus on a shared, lived experience which would give us more of an insight into attitudes, feelings, behaviors, and other psychological elements that have been clearly at play. Anecdotally, a recent, EDL virtual conference attended by one of the researchers in this study focused solely on the kind of factors in the opening sentence of this paragraph. This discussion is not so different from what occurs in 'normal' times, and perhaps provides a required comfort zone in times of uncertainty such as the pandemic. However, it seemed somewhat odd that the other question of, 'By the way, how are we all feeling?' was not addressed by attendees, even when the author placed a question to that effect in the chat.

This study, therefore, is an attempt to shed light on qualitative and experiential shifts occurring as a consequence of EDL related to student-teacher interaction and physical and mental issues prompted by the virtual learning environment. The study also seeks to examine feelings related to the absence of face-to-face teaching, and the social element of the physical work environment as discussed in the findings of Scheiman et al. (2020). This will enable the story of our faculty with respect to their experiences to be shared and allow us to describe and recommend preemptive measures that may prove useful should we find ourselves in a dire situation like this again.

The purpose of this study was to capture the lived experiences of faculty members at a university in the UAE and to assess the personal and professional challenges they encountered as they transitioned to emergency response teaching during the global pandemic. More specifically, it aimed to answer a single research question concerning ways in which distance teaching, conditioned by the pandemic, has impacted the emotional and psychological well-being of faculty in how they interact with students as compared to the face-to-face (F2F) environment.

Literature Review

The transition from in-person to remote learning has allowed instructional continuity during the global pandemic. However, it has been evident that interaction within virtual spaces has had its limitations for some fields, especially the arts, athletics, and experimental inquiries (Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guàrdia & Koole, 2020). The transition from face-to-face to online instruction has forced students, instructors, and college administrators across the globe to adapt to a new ecology of communication and teaching (Schneider et al., 2020; Schieman et al., 2021; Rapanta et al., 2020).

Our university environment reflects this current global reality (Hurley, 2020). On any given day, a teacher's job is beset with various challenges and stressors. These challenges have increased exponentially with the advent of mass distance learning and teaching resulting from the pandemic. The continuing prevalence of forced online learning in

schools and universities has placed a huge burden on teachers, deepening existing struggles while also creating new ones (Lassoued, Alhendawi & Bashitialshaaer, 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020; Schneider & Council, 2021). A drastic change in the educational system had to be adopted to maintain the progression of learning (Schneider & Council, 2021). Online learning, or distance learning, continues to be the most viable option during these unprecedented times (Qazi et al., 2021).

Although it is not a new teaching methodology, the forced, rapid shift from traditional to online learning has posed serious problems for students, teachers, parents, and policymakers. Through online instruction, learners are facing high levels of anxiety and loneliness, while also worrying about unexpected events that affect their academic journeys (Petrie et al., 2020). Similarly, teachers are struggling to adapt to the newly introduced digital platforms and perform their teaching duties in challenging settings. They are coping with increased stress, health concerns, uncertainties related to their jobs, and challenges of the working-from-home norm (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

Online learning was advocated to be implemented as a "strategic asset" in public colleges and universities long before the pandemic (Mccarthy, 2009; Seaman, 2009). Online learning is the necessary contingency plan to continue education in the event of an H1N1 pandemic (Allen and Seaman, 2010). It was observed that activities and programs that are based online have the capacity to be fully integrated into the educational system if all academic staff and personnel cooperate to achieve this mission. A major success criterion for such a large-scale integration is the availability of technologies and adequate resources for faculty and students (McCarthy (2009).

The assessment of online education depends in part on who is assessing it and the extent of their familiarity with it. Faculty with online teaching experience often praise it over traditional, face-to-face instruction, while those who have little to no experience with virtual modality have shown a negative attitude towards it (Seaman, 2009). However, this bias may not only be attributed to a lack of familiarity but may also relate to how teachers of different backgrounds view teaching and learning experiences.

In a recent study, Rapanta et al. (2020) investigated the pedagogical preparedness of teachers who have little or no experience in online teaching amidst the pandemic. The scope of the study was based on interviewing four experts in online learning, highlighting learning design and teacher presence. Designing the learning experience was linked to the context, tools and resources, concrete tasks, and the interaction between them. With a mix of design approaches encompassing synchronous and asynchronous modalities, the authors highlighted the importance of designing a learning activity that matches the expectations and capabilities of the students while considering technical variables, such as internet connection and access to appropriate technology.

Rapanta et al. (2020) have also advocated for teacher presence in the context of online learning, and have categorized it into cognitive, social, and facilitatory presence. Cognitive presence is mostly concerned with students' preparedness to participate effectively in online learning; social presence is attributed to the methods that teachers can use to maintain healthy student-student and teacher-student interactions; and facilitatory presence is mostly associated with the tools and resources used during online class activities.

Course delivery through distance learning can be challenging, especially for classes that require a myriad of activities and lab work. For example, Dietrich et al. (2020) investigated the challenges that the students of the Institut Nationale des Science Appliqués De Toulouse experienced during the lockdown. Over half of the students found it difficult to work on group projects via distance learning. The authors attributed this to many reasons, including a lack of motivation and participation in the group in the online context as well as difficulty in distributing tasks among group members. Regarding practical lab work, the students could not perform experiments in the lab, and hence, alternative methods should be explored and implemented. Typical lab work would include performing experiments, obtaining data, and analyzing results. When it was suggested to provide the students with pre-collected data so they would only need to perform the analysis, more than 60% rejected this approach; many students did not want to miss out on the "hands-on" experience at all (Dietrich et al., 2020).

Similar to group work, students find it difficult to effectively work together to provide a written report for laboratory activities. These reports are assessed, and assessment is generally acknowledged as a major challenge in online learning. Canceling some of the midterm exams and replacing them with homework sets yielded contradictory feedback from the students (Dietrich et al., 2020). Some of them perceived this as a positive change that served to release stress, while others claimed that exams during the semester helped them stay up-to-date and prepared for the final examination of the course. Self-regulation is claimed to be the key in such situations in which the students start to take responsibility for assessing what they have learned (Rapanta et al., 2020). Furthermore, asynchronous activities can aid students in

regulating and assessing their learning process, which is also believed to reduce time spent in long, synchronous sessions by learners and teachers.

In a 2009 study, Seaman (2009) found that faculty complained about the time it requires them to prepare teaching material for online classes versus traditional face-to-face classes. Additionally, among the faculty who have experience in developing online course material, 85 percent claimed that online class development takes "somewhat more" and "a lot more" effort than traditional classes (Seaman, 2009). In a more recent study, Dietrich et al. (2020) echoed the findings of Seaman, claiming that faculty spend more time preparing online lessons (Dietrich et al., 2020).

The main hurdle for the urgent and rapid implementation of online learning is the absence of infrastructure to support distance education. Not all countries have the same capacity to accommodate the implementation of advanced technologies for schools and universities. For example, internet services can be weak, thereby affecting class delivery. Such technical obstacles were highlighted by Lassoued et al. (2020) who explored the effects of the pandemic on the quality of distance learning in Arab universities, particularly Algeria, Egypt, Palestine, and Iraq. In their study, the authors observed that data security and privacy protection are persisting issues, especially in terms of online examinations. Additionally, there were concerns about cheating during electronic exams and the difficulty of confirming the identity of the examinees.

With the various stressors that emerged during the pandemic, coping mechanisms and strategies have become necessary to sustain a healthy learning process. MacIntyre et al. (2020) investigated coping and anti-coping strategies among language teachers to tackle various stressors, which include work-life balance, uncertainty about online teaching, and isolation, among others (Lassoued et al., 2020; MacIntyre et al., 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020). Coping strategies included planning, institutional support, active coping, positive reframing, emotional support, and acceptance. Avoidant strategies encompassed behavioral disengagement, denial, self-distraction, self-blaming, substance use, and venting. The authors found that coping techniques that were constructive and "approach-oriented" were the ones associated with positive outcomes (Lassoued et al., 2020). Conversely, negative psychological outcomes were associated with passive avoidance techniques, which would ultimately trigger more stress and negative emotions.

Theoretical framework

Given the shift from face-to-face to emergency response instruction, which necessitated the use of online teaching, this study is guided by the rise of the social network society. The social network society phenomenon was catalyzed by advancements in information technology and the subsequent increase in the use of the Internet throughout the world, revolutionizing various aspects of human connection.

From this standpoint, the social network society provides a logical framework for examining the three dimensions of interactions within our study: student-student, student-teacher, and student-content, which relates to the obvious interconnectedness of social, economic, and educational spheres (Castell, 2001). The study is also bound by the emerging theory of connectivism (Downes, 2005; Siemens, 2008), which focuses on the nature of learning in a multidimensional digital space.

Methodology

This qualitative study derived data from a 60-item interview questionnaire, which was made available to all faculty members at a top research university in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). All 400 faculty members were invited to participate in the study and respond to the online interview questionnaire. The researchers opted for the online interview questionnaire as the most effective and confidential method for gathering faculty insights during remote teaching. We considered face-to-face interviews, but due to the strict government guidelines concerning interpersonal interactions, these approaches were not deemed feasible at the time.

Participants

Of the 400 faculty members invited to participate in the online interview questionnaire, 26 (6.5%) completed it. Although it was a low response rate, these types of results have become a generalized and less discussed feature of the pandemic (de Konig et al., 2021). There is no straightforward answer as to what constitutes a reasonable sample size in

qualitative research, (Vasileiou et al., 2015). As Sandelowski (1995) states, the sample size should be enough to enable "a new and richly textured understanding of the phenomenon under study" (p. 183). This is certainly the case in our study.

Questions were grouped around the themes of Aydin's (2013) instructor-student interaction (ISI), Chakraborty and Nafukho's (2014) student engagement and motivation, Haythornwaite's (2006) communication and collaboration, and Filho et al.'s (2021) learning space and the use of technology, the emotional and psychological well-being of faculty. The questions were both open-ended and closed-end with similar prompts in the second-tier questions offering a range of adjectival choices focusing on emotions and psychological response. 27% of the questions permitted developmental input of qualitative data through follow-up questions.

The researchers made a conscious decision to not use Likert scales because they would have limited the study to quantitative data. As La Marca (2011) notes, Likert scales can be unidimensional and could fail "to measure the true attitudes of respondents" and ". It is not unlikely that people's answers will be influenced by previous questions or will heavily concentrate on one response (agree/disagree)."

The survey was piloted with a group of 14 faculty members with research expertise and was also reviewed and approved by our institutional review board (IRB). This quality control process and feedback resulted in minor structural and phrasing changes, which increased face and content validity (Ketchenham and Pfleegar, 2008). Data was coded and five themes emerged (shown in Figure 1 below).

Results

The purpose of this study was to capture the lived experiences of faculty members at a university in the UAE and to assess the personal and professional challenges they encountered as they transitioned to emergency response teaching during the global pandemic. More specifically, it aimed to answer a single research question concerning ways in which distance teaching, conditioned by the pandemic, had impacted the mental and psychological well-being of faculty through their interactions with students as compared to the face-to-face (F2F) environment. As previously stated, survey interview responses were coded into five distinctive themes, summarizing the scope of this study and the various dimensions of pedagogies and interpersonal interactions that emerged during emergency response teaching (ERT) at our university.

The first theme illustrates the teaching and learning strategies that faculty sought to implement to sustain instructional continuity and communication with students. The second theme is concerned with learner presence, motivation, and engagement, which is highly important given the significance of physical separation during the pandemic. The third theme relates to the previous one as it focuses on communication and collaboration between members of the academic community, especially between faculty and students. The fourth theme illustrates the transition from in-person settings to virtual spaces using the learning management system and other adaptive technologies. The fifth theme, which has been highly debated in popular and scholarly discourses, focuses on the mental and emotional health of faculty as they navigate these unprecedented circumstances and the sudden changes in their roles and responsibilities.

Figure 1

Themes

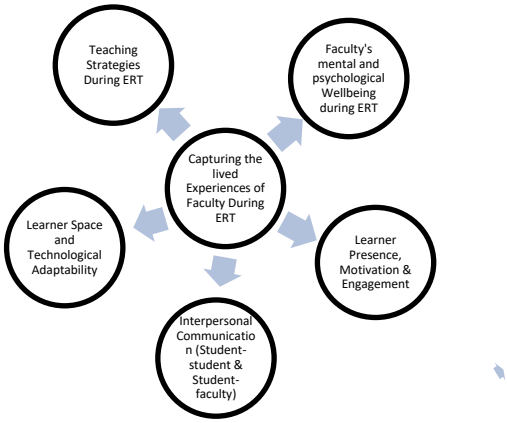

Figure 1 represents the five themes that emerged from analyzing the data collected through this study. The themes capture the faculty members' lived experiences navigating the unforeseen circumstances of the pandemic. A thorough analysis of the findings and testimonials is also presented.

Theme 1: Teaching Strategies and Motivation during ERT

Results from the survey responses revealed that 44% of respondents believe their teaching motivation within the Distance Learning Classroom (DLC) environment has changed when compared to pre-pandemic Face to Face Classroom (F2FC) instruction. For example, one of the respondents stated that their motivation has diminished due to lack of student interaction: "I used to be motivated to interact with my students F2F but now I can only interact with them digitally, which doesn't carry the same energy.*"* Additionally, 85% of respondents indicated that they do not have the same opportunity to engage with students in a DLC as in an F2FC. One faculty member stated, "It is difficult to teach when you cannot see the other people's faces. Our students don't turn on the cameras, so it is alienating that I feel like I am just talking to the computer screen.*"* Another faculty member noted the challenge of forming groups in the DLC: "In the F2FC, I usually walk around the classroom, engaging students, reading their work, conferencing with groups*."*

When asked about teamwork and collaboration, another faculty member expressed their struggle to accurately assess student comprehension in the DLC environment: ". . . *This is next to impossible in a DLC. Without eye contact, facial expression, I cannot understand if students understand the subject and they are really interested in it."*

Theme 2: Learner Presence, Motivation, and Engagement

When asked about the difference in student motivation, 70% of respondents acknowledged that the ways they motivate students in the DLC are different than the F2FC, because the former creates an added level of anxiety and reservations. One faculty member expressed this uncertainty by saying, "Dealing with the unseen is totally different. I make more effort and try my best to motivate the students, but unfortunately, I confess that the student motivation level has dropped dramatically. Multimedia - YouTube, IG Podcasts I make for them flipped classroom prerecorded lectures to watch before class*."*

In terms of independent learning and self-motivation, 84% of faculty respondents believe that students in the DLC do not seek as many opportunities for engagement with the learning process as they do in the F2FC. This decline in student engagement—one measure of effective teaching and learning—has had negative emotional impacts on faculty. When asked about how they felt about student motivation, 61% of respondents expressed disappointment and 57% articulated frustration. This information aligns with those of previous studies about challenges associated with student engagement and motivation (Guth, 2020; Feldman, 2021; Linde et al., 2021). These findings also underscore the disruptive nature of the pandemic vis-à-vis the various functions of life, particularly within academic spheres.

Theme 3: Interpersonal Communication and Collaboration

Interpersonal communication relies on gestural and facial cues, which can be dismissed or difficult to replicate in virtual spaces. When asked about the use of digital devices, such as cameras and microphones, 96% of respondents indicated that students in the DLC never use a camera in the classroom (Johnson, 2020; Hurley, 2020). While face-to-face interactions allow for dynamic interpersonal communication, communicating in virtual spaces is both more limiting and challenging.

Related to this theme, 48% of respondents indicated that sustaining momentum in the DLC is more difficult than the F2FC. One respondent wrote, "It is almost impossible to gauge the level of engagement and understanding of the students, so sustaining momentum becomes difficult.*"* Another faculty member echoed this feeling: "Well, it's very easy to 'lose' your audience--they must somehow stay engaged in the lecture for momentum to be sustained.*"* Highlighting the absence of the "human touch" when interacting in the DLC, one faculty member stated, "The absence of physical contact reduces the degree of paralinguistic factors in communication such as humor, individual reciprocated responses and other human factors.*"* Moreover, technical issues, such as high server demand and weak Internet signals, sometimes affected connectivity, and thereby the learning management system (LMS), especially when teachers and students were using their cameras (Castelli & Savery, 2021).

Theme 4: Learning Space and Technological Adaptability

Other challenges arose due to ERT and the immediate need to shift to virtual instruction using LMS and other adaptive technologies with which people were unfamiliar. Educators everywhere found themselves in an emergent situation that required them to adapt quickly and learn new DLC technologies to effectively deliver education online. In addition, working from home added other sets of challenges, such as finding a suitable workspace and securing a steady Internet connection.

The faculty respondents' experiences adapting to DCL technology were varied, and influenced by their readiness to transition to online teaching. When asked about their experience adapting to DLC technology, 70% of the respondents said they faced some or a few challenges; 16% found the transition to be quite challenging despite 87% of respondents expressing satisfaction with their existing preparation. Even teachers who were highly prepared and accustomed to online technology experienced some difficulty. One of the respondents noted, *"*I was already pretty good with technology, so some of the same things I used in the classroom, I could use online--like Google Docs, etc. I tried to make my teaching style the same, but it is a bit challenging.*"*

Moreover, for those who were not ready or inexperienced, the support available to help a smooth transition was instrumental in overcoming any technological barriers, particularly for those who needed to change their teaching style for the DLC. 55% of respondents indicated that using the digital platform had significantly affected their teaching style. While 45% of respondents believed that the challenges they faced would have been easier to overcome if they were on campus, the remaining 54% were either unsure or did not agree. With respect to the support provided, 75% were generally satisfied with the support provided.

Adapting to the environment where physical changes were required revealed a variety of results and perspectives. For example, 41.67% found it challenging, and 48.15% of respondents believe that physical separation is difficult to deal with. Lack of physical interaction with colleagues is considered a "motivation killer" to some as explained by one of the respondents:

> "For me personally, 'my home is my home' and 'my work is my work' and I like to keep the two distinct. A structured working day in a work environment is important to me. To be able to go home and relax with my family at the end of the working day is similarly important. The current situation has really been damaging to achieving a proper work-life balance."

Theme 5: Faculty Emotional and Psychological Well-being during ERT

A decline in student engagement and motivation is coupled with disappointment and frustration from faculty members who are responsible for guiding their pupils and keeping them engaged throughout the learning process. When asked about how lack of student motivation impacted their emotions, 61% of faculty respondents articulated disappointment and 57% expressed frustration. Additionally, 88% responded that the DLC requires more multitasking than the F2FC due to the various tools and strategies needed to engage students and ensure instructional continuity.

Among those who responded to this question, 65% indicated that the process of multitasking raises their stress level. Similarly, and saliently, responses to questions about lack of engagement, student participation, and attempting to motivate students, most often featured the following emotions: "frustrated," "disappointed," "resigned," "de-motivated," and "annoyed.". Mental tiredness after online classes was also greater for most respondents (59%).

With respect to pastoral support for faculty members, 48% of respondents felt it was not provided, 18% described it as "inadequate," and others were unaware of this resource. One respondent commented, "I was not aware of any pastoral support for lecturers." Another faculty member noted, "There was some encouraging emails, but I do not think systematic pastoral support was given. But, I didn't need any." Separation of work and personal life was another related issue with 55% of respondents agreeing that the absence of in-person socializing in the traditional work environment was a difficult challenge to navigate. One respondent stated: "I miss my colleagues and all the informal opportunities to talk about work, life, etc." Another commented, "Not having discussions and interactions with colleagues and students is difficult." In relation to anxiety, 37% of respondents indicated it being higher for them in the ERT context than when on campus; 40% acknowledged fear of failure was higher; 66% responded that disconnect from the classroom was higher; and 40% attested to mood changes being higher.

Discussion

The transition from in-person to remote learning has allowed for administrative and instructional continuity during the two years of the global pandemic (Guth, 2020). Institutions of higher learning in the UAE and around the world have created urgent policies and practices to ensure the safe delivery of educational programs in accordance with government mandates (Chaudhry et al., 2021; Linde et al., 2021). However, it has been evident that interaction within virtual spaces has created a myriad of andragogical and psychosocial issues given the new ecology of interaction between the college learner and the educator (Allen and Seaman, 2013; Ke and Kwak, 2013). Findings from this study align with previous research and suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted various functions of higher education, including instructional strategies, student engagement, interpersonal communication, and overall academic support (Dietrich et al., 2020; Linde et al., 2021).

Based on the identified themes—emergency response teaching strategies, learner presence and engagement, interpersonal communication, learning space, and faculty emotional and psychological well-being--it is evident that the transition from F2FC to DLC has altered the role of the instructor, the learner, and the environment in which they operate (Filho et al., 2021). The absence of in-person interaction has "forced" faculty to think of newer and more innovative ways of engaging "invisible" learners, which has been physically and emotionally draining (Chaudhry et al., 2021; Filho et al., 2021). The fact that online instruction had previously not been used at the institution where this study took place may also suggest that faculty faced an added layer of complex challenges compared to institutions that were already offering distance learning programs. Thus, the level of training that was required for the transition to distance learning was much higher.

One common concern that faculty members expressed in their responses to the interview questionnaire is the lack of student engagement during synchronous instruction, which echoes Chaudhry's (2021) findings. Additionally, respondents expressed frustration with the lack of interpersonal interactions, which is critical to establishing a sense of community and a means of gauging engagement (Sattar, 2017; Vrba and Mitchell, 2019). These findings echo those of other recent studies about the challenges of engaging students using learning management and other videoconferencing tools (Linde et al., 2021; Taberski, 2020). During EDL, much of the discussion amongst teachers has focused on mastering unfamiliar platforms, software, and programs, which is clearly understandable.

In this study, however, these were not necessarily the predominant issues preoccupying faculty; teachers were more concerned with the absence of the human factors and community, especially engagement, that they had been accustomed to in the F2F classroom. Currently, discussions among faculty colleagues often focus on how these aspects might be "recovered." However, it may be that such a recovery is simply not possible and we are chasing a chimera. The digital learning environment is not temporary. Moreover, it is profoundly different from the F2F classroom Wand future discussion needs to reflect that reality. As instructors are the ones who craft the syllabus and deliver the classes, there may be a natural tendency among scholars to look at the situation from the teacher's point of view. However, how might the findings of this study have changed had it been conducted with the participation of students? Are student voices being heard and intentionally incorporated into emerging scholarship in teaching and learning since the arrival of COVID?

Based on the experience of the last two years, a discussion between educators and students to identify a collaborative approach for future online learning and teaching could be a useful way forward (Gray and Halbert, 1998). Thoughtfully involving learners in aspects of the education process, such as team teaching, syllabus planning, staging, lesson structure, delivery, assessment protocols, and materials design could be part of this more collaborative and inclusive approach and might well result in higher buy-in from students. Empowerment, after all, is surely a motor for engagement as Bekirogullari (2019) reminds us. Future research might usefully focus on the student experience of this type of learning, and thereby, bring more voices to the discussion to enrich scholarship and improve the quality of education.

Implications and Conclusion

Globally, teacher levels of anxiety and stress noticeably increased during the lockdown and online teaching, (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021), and support and pastoral care mechanisms were often not in place (Chaudhry et al., 2021). The speed of the spread of the pandemic and its unpredictable nature left educational institutions across the globe

understandably unprepared to continue their services as the first response tended to logically relate to physical safety. Consistent with the findings herein, our study showed faculty concern about pastoral support. Providing simple support mechanisms such as telephone, online, or face-to-face access to informal counseling, peer support groups, and other forums is especially important in light of research that psychological effects on teachers and can be long-lasting (Holmes et al., 2020; Linde et al., 2021). Overall, the study captured the vulnerability of traditional F2FC instruction considering the global pandemic and other potential disruptors such as human conflict, natural disasters, etc. While the educational community, including the university where this study was conducted, might return to the traditional F2FC, the pandemic has forever altered teaching and learning.

One of the limitations of this study was the absence of in-person interviews due to circumstances. Another limitation of this study is the reduced response rate (6.5%), which was due in part to the added workload and fatigue that faculty were enduring during the time of this study (De Koenig et al., 2021). Given these limitations and the nature of the themes that emerged, future studies should consider the challenges that faculty teaching at top research universities have revealed and focus on individual and institutional mitigation processes. It is also important to investigate whether the lessons learned have created a new educational culture that is equipped with emotional, andragogical, and instructional skills to address future challenges and disruptions. It is equally important for future studies to consider the value added from transitioning into distance learning, particularly as it relates to the incorporation of new technologies that are conducive to effective teaching and learning for both the F2FC and DLC.

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